



U.S. Department of Justice  
United States Attorney  
District of Kansas

## NEWS RELEASE

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September 9, 2004

### TWELVE CHARGED IN MULTI-NATIONAL DRUG TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION ORGANIZATION OPERATING IN KANSAS CITY, KANSAS - ARREST AND SEARCH WARRANTS EXECUTED

KANSAS, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren, United States Attorney Todd Graves from the Western District of Missouri, Drug Enforcement Administration Assistant Special Agent in Charge Shawn Johnson, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge Al Patton, and Kansas City Kansas Police Chief Ron Miller announced today, September 9, 2004, the culmination of Operation Soda-Pop, an eighteen month investigation into the distribution of large quantities of cocaine and marijuana, that has resulted in the arrest of eleven people in the Kansas City area, and El Paso, Texas. Five search warrants were executed yesterday at locations in the Kansas City area and the Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri.

Melgren said that **Operation Soda-Pop** was an eighteen month investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force that coordinated the efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement in the investigation of a large marijuana and cocaine distribution ring that was operating in the Kansas City area.

The indictment alleges that from January 1, 2002, through August 11, 2004, this multi-national drug transportation and distribution organization organized the shipment of marijuana and cocaine from Mexico through El Paso, Texas, into the Kansas City area. The indictment further alleges that the organization transported marijuana and cocaine using commercial trucks, passenger vehicles, and trailers and that cash derived from the sale and distribution of the cocaine and marijuana was collected, packaged, concealed in motor vehicles and transported to El Paso, Texas, and then on to various locations in Mexico. The indictment alleges that proceeds from the sale of the cocaine and marijuana were also used to purchase personal and real property in Texas, Kansas, Missouri, and Mexico.

The indictment further alleges that members of this organization purchased an automobile repair business, Anaco Transmission, in Merriam, Kansas, where marijuana and

cocaine was received and distributed. The indictment alleges that marijuana was also delivered from El Paso, Texas, to a turf farm in Stillwell, Kansas. The indictment alleges that members of this organization traveled to El Paso, Texas, to coordinate the shipments of marijuana and cocaine to the Kansas City area. The indictment alleges that members of this organization conspired to distribute approximately 11,272 kilograms (approximately 24,798 pounds) of marijuana and approximately 293 kilograms (approximately 644 pounds) of cocaine from January 1, 2002, through August 11, 2004. The indictment alleges the forfeiture of \$14,534,099.00 in U.S. currency, representing the proceeds resulting from this conspiracy; property in Overland Park, Kansas, Merriam, Kansas, and Raytown, Missouri; currency previously seized totaling \$1,545,401; and vehicles used in the conspiracy.

The indictment was returned by a federal grand jury in Wichita, Kansas, on August 25, 2004, but was sealed until search warrants were executed and arrests made. Those indicted include:

- **Gerardo Reyes-Lopez**, 42, Raytown, Missouri, **Jacinto E. Hernandez**, 39, Kansas City, Kansas, **Bill Joe Antle**, 37, Overland Park, Kansas, **Eduardo Agramon-Castro**, 36, Kansas City, Kansas, **Jesus Saucedo-Ramirez**, 38, Kansas City, Kansas, **Maria E. Hernandez**, 36, Kansas City, Kansas, **Sigifredo Paez**, 31, Kansas City, Kansas, **Jesus Castaneda**, 39, Kansas City, Kansas, **Lewis Lamonte Smith**, 39, Las Vegas, Nevada, **Dennis Goyer**, 40, Stillwell, Kansas, **Germain Devia**, 28, Kansas City, Kansas, and **Daniel Moreno**, 29, El Paso, Texas, are each charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute approximately 11,272 kilograms (approximately 24,798 pounds) of marijuana and approximately 293 kilograms (approximately 644 pounds) of cocaine from January 1, 2002, through August 11, 2004.

If convicted, each face a minimum of ten years and a maximum of life for conspiracy plus penalties for additional charges as set forth in the indictment.

Melgren said that everyone charged in the indictment except Lewis Smith was arrested on September 8, 2004, Lewis has not yet been arrested. Daniel Moreno was arrested in El Paso, Texas, and will make his initial appearance in U.S. District Court in El Paso, Texas, today. The remaining individuals will make their initial appearances in U.S. District Court in Kansas City, Kansas, today at 3:30 p.m. before U.S. Magistrate Judge James P. O'Hara.

The Drug Enforcement Administration was provided substantial assistance in this investigation by the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, the Bureau of Immigration and Custom Enforcement, Kansas City, Kansas, Police Department, Johnson County Sheriff's Office, and the Overland Park Police Department. Other agencies also assisted with this investigation and the execution of the search warrants including the FBI, the

Missouri Highway Patrol, the Kansas City, Missouri, Police Department, the Kansas Highway Patrol, the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the U.S. Marshals Service, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Missouri. The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Tristram Hunt, Assistant U.S. Attorney Marietta Parker, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Mike Christensen.

"The investigation and prosecution of multi-state, organized crime drug rings is a top priority of the United States Department of Justice," said U.S. Attorney Eric Melgren. "It is a priority shared by the United States Attorney's office for Kansas, and by all of the law enforcement agencies represented here. Drugs and drug trafficking are a scourge on our society, and we are committed to aggressively combating them. You may be assured that all of us represented here will continue our aggressive investigation and prosecution of such cases."

Melgren added, "This is exactly the type of multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional collaboration which Attorney General Ashcroft has encouraged, and which will be the key to turning the tide on illegal drugs in our communities. This represents the best in federal, multi-state, and local law enforcement cooperation, and we have been proud to be a part of this effort."

Shawn Johnson, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the DEA's Kansas City office, also praised the outstanding cooperation displayed by the participating agencies. "The success of this investigation is directly attributable to our commitment as a team to not only attack an organization's drug distribution network, but to also be equally aggressive in destroying their ability to move and hide their substantial illegal proceeds. The DEA is convinced this dual approach renders a drug gang incapable of recovering and provides the greatest positive impact on the community we all serve."

"Money laundering constitutes a serious threat to our communities and to the integrity of our financial system," said Al Patton, Special Agent in Charge of IRS Criminal Investigation. "IRS-CI together with the law enforcement community is united in our effort to prosecute and financially disrupt criminal organizations that are involved in this type of criminal activity."

"This investigation is yet another example of the cooperation and professionalism between the Drug Enforcement Administration task force and the Kansas City Kansas Police Department in the greater Kansas City area. The citizens in the Kansas City area are well served by our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners," said Kansas City Kansas Chief Ron Miller.

"The Johnson County Sheriff's Office has had a long working relationship with the Kansas City DEA office and due to this cooperation a case that our office has had a long standing interest in has been addressed. By all agencies working together in the metropolitan area this large scale narcotics organization has been compromised. We look forward to

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keeping this good working relationship with the DEA and all local law enforcement agencies,” said Lieutenant Brian Clark.

“This is an excellent example of local and federal law enforcement agencies working together to investigate and apprehend those responsible for large scale illegal drug trafficking. Through this combined multi-jurisdictional effort, the supply of illegal drugs has been significantly reduced. The officers and agents who investigated this far-reaching case should be commended for their determination, commitment and dedication to duty,” said Overland Park Police Chief John Douglass.

As in any criminal case, a person charged with a crime is considered innocent until and unless proven guilty. An indictment merely alleges criminal conduct.

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